



COMMERCIAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

More than 10 years ago when Bloomington began to inspect residential neighborhoods, it was an innovative concept. Now, many first-tier suburbs are following the City's example. In 2008, Bloomington started inspections of commercial properties modeled on the concepts learned from the Residential Property Maintenance Program. In 2009, commercial inspections resulted in corrections of more than 220 violations. The majority of the issues concerned signage and exterior maintenance. Inspectors spend a significant amount of time explaining the City's requirements and the reasons behind them. This educational component improves compliance with the orders to correct and future compliance with code provisions.

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE FINDING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

The City uses its property maintenance program to help homeowners maintain desirable neighborhoods. In 2009, Environmental Health staff worked with 2,600 property owners to correct violations. Although systematic inspections are the primary way violations are discovered, resident inquiries are very helpful. Environmental Health investigated more than 800 resident inquiries last year, responding to reports of code violations such as tall grass or weeds, abandoned vehicles, items stored in yards and deteriorated home exteriors. The most frequently cited violations in 2009 were vehicles and trailers, storage, unmowed grass, weeds and brush. Investigating inquiries within two business days is the City's goal. Some may take longer to investigate if the violation is not visible from the street. Most owners correct violations after receiving a verbal or written notice. However, some property violations require more notices and time. Since 2006, the City has used a multi-disciplined approach to dealing with problem properties by combining the efforts of Environmental Health, Police, Human Services, Public Health and the City Attorney's Office. The goal is to bring problem properties into compliance quickly using all resources available. By combining its efforts, the City has achieved excellent results. Because enforcement is the last resort, the City prefers that residents be proactive about maintaining their properties. Talk to your neighbor or block captain if you see an issue in your neighborhood. Helping your neighbor recognize the problem and take corrective action before the problem escalates is a much more effective way to build neighbor-to-neighbor relationships than calling in a complaint. When backyard diplomacy does not work, call Environmental Health at 952-563-8934, e-mail an inquiry to envhealth@ci.bloomington.mn.us or use Ask the City on the City's website. Give the inspector time to observe the violation and talk to the property owner to resolve the issue. Be patient. Resolutions may take more than a few days due to unforeseen complexities of the issues faced.

WEBSITE KEYWORDS: PROPERTY MAINTENANCE FORM.

With more than 25,000 single-family homes, nearly 350 multi-family apartment buildings and 1,900 commercial properties, property maintenance control is a big job. Environmental Health needs your help to keep Bloomington looking good.

CASE STUDY

The issue: Tall grass and weeds are discovered on a property.

How the process works:

1

Resident inquiry is received or violation discovered through inspection by City staff.

2

A correction notice is issued. Owner is given ten days to comply.

3

City staff does follow-up inspection and may contact the owner or tenant.

4

If compliance is not achieved, City contractor mows.

5

Owner is billed. If bill is not paid, the amount is assessed to the property.



EMERALD ASH BORER UPDATE TREE DISEASE STILL A THREAT

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), the small, iridescent green beetle that attacks and kills ash trees, still poses a threat to Bloomington's many ash trees. Although the Minnesota Department of Agriculture has not found any cases of EAB outside of Minneapolis and St. Paul, the City will remain vigilant in preparing for the tree disease. There is no known way to stop EAB disease, but the City is taking measures to control its spread.

According to Assistant Maintenance Superintendent Paul Edwardson, the City recently completed an ash tree inventory and is beginning to remove ash trees that were rated "poor." Removing unhealthy trees reduces the number of possible host trees for EAB. Healthy trees are better equipped to fend off pests and disease, whereas weak trees are much more susceptible to disease. The Bloomington City Council passed an ordinance last year



prohibiting the planting of additional ash trees in the city. In the meantime, Edwardson recommends residents take extra care of the trees they are trying to retain by giving them extra water. WEBSITE KEYWORD: EAB.



2010 CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE TEN QUESTIONS, TEN MINUTES

Why is it important to fill out and mail back your form and encourage others to do the same? The 2010 Census data will directly affect how more than \$4 trillion is allocated to local, state and tribal governments over the next 10 years. For every Bloomington resident who is not counted, federal money that could support highway and transit, Head Start and schools, community development and dozens of other programs will be left on the table. Census numbers also determine which states gain or lose representation in Congress. According to the Minnesota State Demographer's Office, Minnesota is one of several states that may lose a congressional seat. Counting everyone will help prevent this loss of representation. With one of the shortest questionnaires in history, the 2010 Census asks for name, gender, age, race, ethnicity, relationship and whether you own or rent your home. It takes only about 10 minutes for the average household to complete.

WEBSITE KEYWORDS: 2010 CENSUS.

AN EYE ON CRIME BUSINESS WATCH PROGRAM

The Bloomington Police Department (BPD) is reaching out to local businesses and property management companies to offer free security assessments and crime prevention training. The Bloomington Police Business Watch Program, modeled after the very successful Neighborhood Watch Program, will offer security assessments, which include an onsite inspection of a building's locks, lighting, alarms and landscaping. The program also includes training on identity theft, personal safety, workplace violence, crime prevention and more. BPD is currently working with Bloomington's Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, and Convention and Visitors Bureau to bring the program to more businesses.

"With more than 6,000 businesses in the city, it's a challenge to make connections," Officer Heidi Miller said. "We want businesses to know that they have a person to talk to in the Police Department." Coming this spring, the BPD will host its first Business Watch meeting. For more information, contact Officer Heidi Miller at 952-563-4975 or e-mail hmiller@ci.bloomington.mn.us.